

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

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R 231410Z MAY 74

FM AMEMBASSY LISBON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9663

INFO AMCONSUL LUANDA

AMCONSUL LOURENCO MARQUES

AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

AMCONSUL OPORTO

AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT PO BR

SUBJ: REACTION TO NEWS OF CAETANO-THOMAZ EXILE TO BRAZIL

SUMMARY: OPINION AIRED IN MEDIA TO DATE ON CAETANO-THOMAZ EXILE TO BRAZIL IS UNIVERSALLY CRITICAL. THIS ISSUE HAS LED TO FIRST CRITICISM OF JUNTA BY LEFT. WHILE MANY PERPLEXED AND UPSET BY JUNTA DECISION, OTHERS FEEL DECISION WAS BEST SOLUTION TO DIFFICULT DILEMMA. EPISODE MAY BE EVIDENCE JUNTA HAS POWER TO DEFY LEFT AND IS PREPARED TO USE IT. END SUMMARY.

1. PRESS IN LISBON, WITH ONE EXCEPTION, SO FAR HAS NOT EDITORIALIZED BUT HAS CARRIED SEVERAL ARTICLES AND COMMUNIQUE FROM POLITICAL GROUPS CRITICAL OF JUNTA DECISION TO PERMIT FORMER PRESIDENT THOMAZ AND EX-PRIME MINISTER CAETANO TO LEAVE FUNCHAL FOR EXILE IN BRAZIL. ONLY EXCEPTION TO PRESS MODERATION ON THIS ISSUE IS SOCIALIST REPUBLIC, WHICH CARRIED STINGING EDITORIAL MAY 22 CRITICIZING JUNTA. EDITORIAL DEPLORED JUNTA DECISION WHICH IT LABELED

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INCOMPREHENSIBLE AND AN AFFRONT TO JUSTICE.

2. CENTRAL COMMITTEE PCP CALLED JUNTA DECISION "PROFOUNDLY SHOCKING", AND EXPRESSED ITS "SURPRISE AND CONCERN" THAT JUNTA WOULD TAKE SUCH A STEP WITHOUT CONSULTING FIRST WITH "DEMOCRATIC FORCES". SOCIALIST PARTY HAS ALSO EXPRESSED SURPRISE AND DISAGREEMENT WITH DECISION. IT ISSUED MAY 20 COMMUNIQUE (WHICH AIRED ON EVENING TV NEWSCAST) DECLARING PARTY INTENDS ASK FOR EXTRADITION OF THE TWO EXILES. PARTY LEADER MARIO SOARES, WHEN ASKED FOR HIS COMMENTS ON EXILE, SIMPLY STATED THAT "NO ONE IN PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT WAS SURPRISED BY JUNTA DECISION". PCP HEAD ALVARO CUNHAL WOULD NOT GIVE A PERSONAL OPINION TO PRESS ON SUBJECT.

3. LEFT-WING SOCIALIST MOVEMENT (MES) LABELLED THIS "FIRST MANIFESTLY ANTI-POPULAR DECISION" TAKEN BY JUNTA. SAID IT "ENERGETICALLY DENOUNCES" MOVE WHICH IT CLAIMS TAKEN AS RESULT VERY STRONG PRESSURES FROM BIG BUSINESS AND (UNSPECIFIED) FOREIGN EMBASSIES. DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT (MDP) ALSO EXPRESSED ITS "PUZZLEMENT AND CONCERN" AND SAID DECISION TO RELEASE THE TWO MOST RESPONSIBLE FIGURES OF FASCIST REGIME WILL LEAD TO DIFFICULTIES IN FUTURE (PRESUMABLY A REFERENCE TO PRECEDENT THIS MOVE WILL SET IN REGARDS TO TRIAL OF LOWER RANKING MEMBERS OF FORMER REGIME). CENTRIST PARTY (PPD) LIKewise SHOWED ITS CONCERN OVER PRECEDENT JUNTA MOVE WILL SET FOR "FUTURE ANALOGOUS CASES", AND SAID IT HOPES JUNTA WILL CONTINUE HOLD OTHERS FOUND RESPONSIBLE FOR COMMITTING CRIMES.

4. GOVERNMENT-RUN TELEVISION NETWORK HAS NOT DIRECTLY EDITORIALIZED SO FAR. HOWEVER, SOON AFTER NEWS OF THOMAZ-CAETANO DEPARTURE KNOWN IN LISBON, TV BROADCAST MAN-IN-STREET INTERVIEWS IN WHICH THOSE INTERVIEWED WERE UNIVERSALLY AGAINST MOVE. NO ONE FAVORABLE TO EXILE INTERVIEWED, WHICH SUGGESTS COVERAGE MAY HAVE BEEN DELIBERATELY SLANTED AGAINST JUNTA.

5. LEFT-WING JOURNALIST COMPLAINED BITTERLY TO PAO THAT DECISION WAS DISASTROUS AND WOULD "COST SPINOLA PRESIDENCY". STUDENT FRIEND OF EMBOFF REPORTS STUDENTS VERY UNHAPPY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WITH DECISION. ANOTHER SOURCE REPORTS MIDDLE-LEVEL MILITARY OFFICERS ALSO DISPLEASED.

6. WE UNDERSTAND MANY IN MIDDLE AND UPPER LEVELS SOCIETY AND IN BUSINESS CIRCLES, HOWEVER, QUIETLY APPROVE MOVE AS BEST AND MOST REALISTIC SOLUTION TO A NASTY DILEMMA.

COMMENT: 7. DECISION TO RELEASE THE TWO PROBABLY PROMPTED

BY A NUMBER OF FACTORS. MOST IMPORTANT IS THAT CAETANO IS STILL IMMENSELY POPULAR WITH MANY PORTUGUESE, AND FEW WOULD LIKE TO SEE HIM HUMILIATED IN PUBLIC TRIAL OR OTHERWISE HARMED. IT NOTEWORTHY THAT, ALTHOUGH THEIR PARTIES SPOKE OUT, CUNHAL AND SOARES DID NOT CRITICIZE JUNTA OVER THIS ISSUE. IT MAY BE THAT THEY FELT CONSTRAINED FROM SO DOING BY VIRTUE THEIR PARTICIPATION IN PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT.

8. ALTHOUGH WE HAVE NO DETAILS, IT QUITE POSSIBLE THAT SPINOLA PROMISED CAETANO AND THOMAZ EXILE IN RETURN FOR THEIR SURRENDER AND THAT LEADERS OF ARMED FORCES MOVEMENT CONSENTED TO THAT COMMITMENT WHEN THEY ASKED SPINOLA TO TAKE CHARGE. IN ANY CASE, MOVE HAS TRIGGERED PUBLIC CRITICISM OF JUNTA FOR FIRST TIME; PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT (PG) NOT A TARGET BECAUSE FONMIN HAS SAID DECISION WAS MADE BY JUNTA BEFORE PG WAS FORMED. JUNTA'S DECISION MAY BE SIGN THAT IT IS PREPARED TO IMPOSE LIMITS ON VINDICTIVE ACTIONS AGAINST MEMBERS OF OLD REGIME, EVEN AT RISK OF ANTAGONIZING THE LEFT.
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